

SWISS POULTRY KEEPING AND POULTRY BREEDING IN THE WAR YEARS

KARL KLEB,

President Union of Swiss Egg-utilizers Associations, Zurich, Switzerland

In the Union of the Swiss Egg-utilizers Associations, SEG, all the Associations interested in the Swiss National Egg and Poultry production are combined. These are: the regional associations; SEG Zurich; SEG Berne; SEG Romande; the Swiss Peasant Association; the Swiss Poultry Breeders Association; the Swiss Farm Association; the Farmwives' Association; the agricultural associations; the dairy associations and the Union of Swiss Consumers Association.

Before the war the annual consumption of eggs was around 700 millions, of which about one-third was imported. Poultry meat consumption was estimated to be about 8000 tons, of which about one-half was imported. Import permits were restricted in relation to domestic production. Domestic poultry keeping by the peasants was protected and the erection of collecting stations was limited. Industrial poultry keeping was not encouraged. There were years in which the SEG was obliged to assign over 50 million eggs and up to 200,000 Kg. poultry meat, the importers being obliged to take over these sums.

The Union SEG demanded good quality, guaranteed complete market and concerned itself in obtaining, as far as possible, just prices for the domestic products.

As the war encircled our land completely, imports became gradually reduced and even failed completely. Eggs, which were declared an essential food, were rationed. The number of collecting stations was immediately increased and the collections placed in the hands of the SEG. Besides the collecting on the part of the SEG, the Import Association, Gela, which had been active even before the war, collected domestic eggs, especially in French Switzerland.

The egg and poultry section, under its president Dr. Hans Engler, Director of the Swiss Poultry Breeders School, combined production and marketing into one very well functioning unit. A well-founded equalization fund permitted all classes of participants in the poultry industry to find their profit and their place in the association.

Only the harmonious collaboration of all these circles and the discipline of the domestic producers made it possible to furnish the Swiss people with eggs during all the war years. The number per person and per year was 30-40 eggs. This number is to be remarked upon in comparison to other countries in time of war.

Poultry meat was not rationed. As it was point-free, the temptation was obvious to raise its price. While the price of an egg remained stable at 35 Rp. during summer and winter, the price of pullets rose in retail to 13-15 francs per kilo. The price of old hens rose to 12 francs per kilo. In spite of these abnormal prices, the Swiss poultry raisers demonstrated their patriotism in furnishing 100,000 kilos of poultry to the SEG slaughtering points at lower Federally-set prices.

Feed prices were severely controlled. For grain, mash, and protein feeds, the price per 100 kilos was about 50 francs. The Division of Agriculture under the leadership of Vice-director Landis managed to supply all poultry keepers and breeders, with adequate feed.

SEG, in co-operation with the Swiss Poultry Breeders Association, set up a culling program which resulted in the weeding out of poor producers and reserved the scarce feed for those hens which were capable of laying at least 150 eggs a year. Through this the population of hens diminished from about 5 million to about 3 million but the number of eggs did not decrease in a similar proportion. War conditions stimulated interest in egg production in most places and greater care in poultry raising. This was necessary in Switzerland, particularly among the peasant population.

Individuals raising poultry for their own use were permitted to keep the eggs of one and one-half hen per person. It was hoped to achieve more on a voluntary basis and without recourse to harsh measures. Farmers were asked to give up 70 of 90 eggs per hen per year; instead of this the average was 135 eggs. If a producer sold eggs directly, he was obliged to furnish coupons at the collection points. In the year 1944, the controlled number of eggs was 115,138,951. In this number, eggs consumed on the producers' premises are not included.

Transactions are now under way to lead to private-right agreements with egg and poultry importers upon the return of normal conditions so that importers and domestic producers may work together. The OVA, the association of egg and poultry importers, will find a loyal cooperation with SEG.

The Union SEG, however, will continue to keep its aims high: (1) Utilization and marketing of all domestic eggs and poultry products; (2) Recognition of the precedence of domestic eggs and poultry products; (3) Improving the quality of domestic products; (4) Attainment of prices for the domestic products in accordance with the cost of raising; (5) Preparation of suitable feeds for poultry raising and the supervision of mixed mashes.